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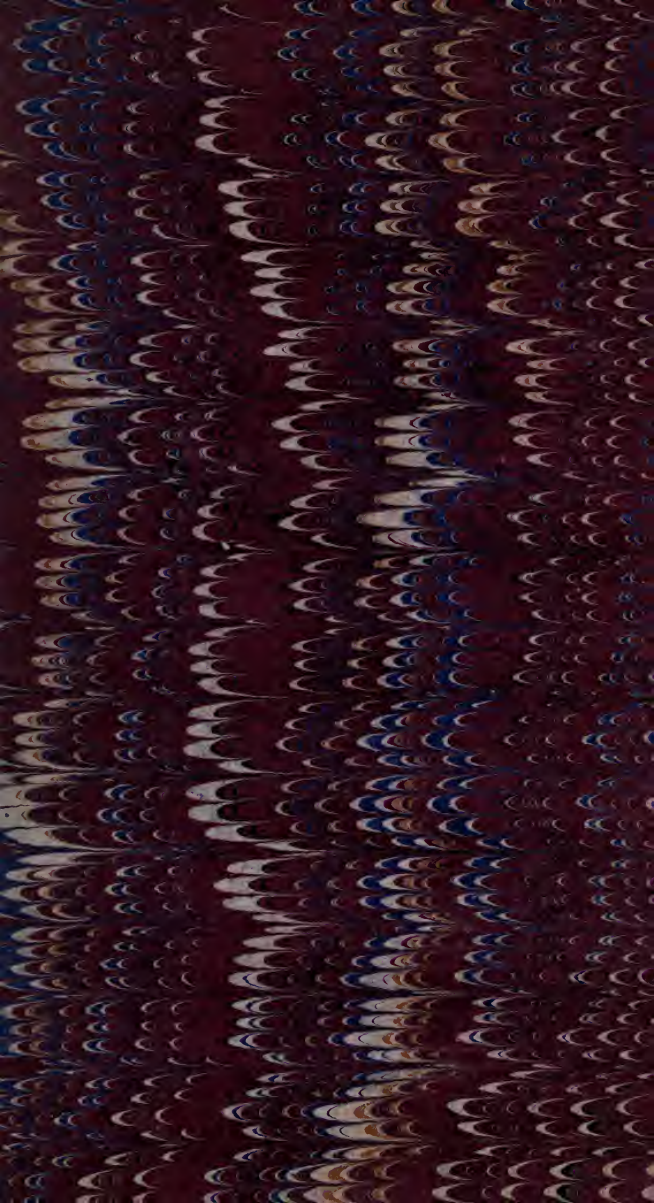
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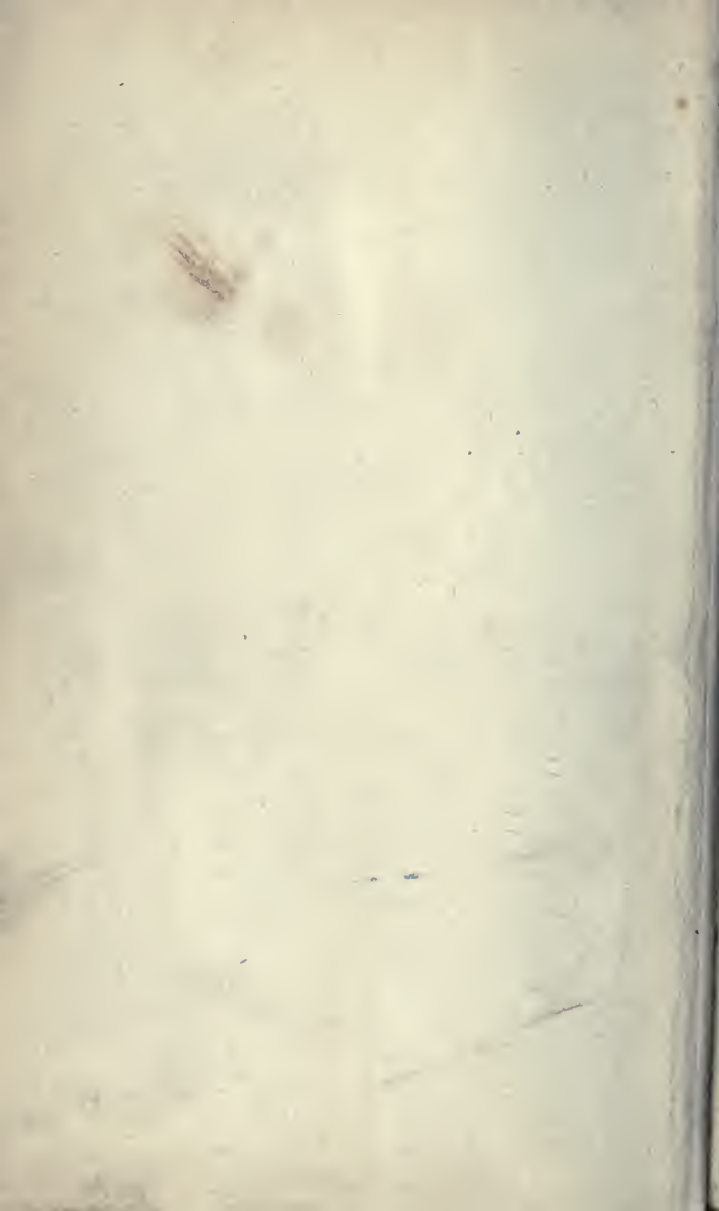
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*Presented by*  
*The Rev H. Seykes.*  
THE

# DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

AND THE

HARMONY OF THE APOSTLES

Paul and James

CONSIDERED,

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE TREATISE OF  
BISHOP O'BRIEN.

IN THREE LETTERS,

REPRINTED FROM THE BRITISH MAGAZINE.

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DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF STUDENTS IN DIVINITY.

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LONDON:  
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1862.

*The references to the Treatise on Justification by Faith, by Bishop O'Brien, apply to the First Edition of that Work.*



## LETTER I.

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SIR,

The doctrine of justification is one to which, though already the theme of so much wearisome, angry, and often verbal controversy, we may be excused for reverting again and again, if it is with any hope of correcting error, or reconciling differences. I venture, accordingly, at a season of the year when perhaps the demands on your valuable space are least oppressive, to ask a share of it, for the proofs, or what appear to me to be the proofs, of the three following propositions. 1. That justification is from first to last, by faith, and by faith only. 2. That there is nothing in this doctrine militating with the principle, as asserted by St. James, that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," according to the plainest and most obvious sense of those expressions. 3. That St. James's expressions will not admit of any other meaning, or, in other words, that the meaning of St. James's language, (which alone has given rise to the notion of a discrepancy between his doctrine

of justification and the doctrine of St. Paul,) is, notwithstanding, the true meaning.

On the establishment of the first of these three propositions I shall not feel it necessary to bestow any large amount of labour. My concern is chiefly with the second of them. I will remark, however, that I yield to no one in the sense which I entertain of the importance of the doctrine. I subscribe *ex animo* to the sentiment of its being “*articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*.” In this doctrine, according to the just remark of Bishop O’Brien (Sermon 4), is involved the notion of the Gospel as “a scheme of free forgiveness.” Therefore, it “is of faith that it might be by grace.” Mingle any “work or deserving” on the part of man with the grace which it proposes, and its salvation no longer is gratuitous. It is only so far forth, as it is *of* faith, that it is *by* grace, and admit, in consequence, that the salvation is *entirely* by grace, and it will follow, that it is also *entirely* “of faith,” that we are justified by faith, and by faith *only*, justified from first to last in the character and capacity of “ungodly” without any thing “whereof to glory,” or any occasion afforded to us for “despising others,” for saying, “Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou,” to the worst or most obdurate of the species. Is there, then, 2ndly, any thing in such a doctrine inconsistent with St. James’s principle, that “a man is justified by works, and not by faith only,” in the simplest and most natural sense of the expressions? It is

imagined to be obvious that there is. But is it, then, (let me ask,) inconsistent to suppose that, in the case of the woman with the issue of blood, her "*faith* had saved her," and at the same time that she "*touched* the border" of the Saviour's garment, and that "*immediately* she was healed?" Is it inconsistent to suppose that "by *faith* the Israelites passed through the sea, as by dry land," and yet, that they crossed it *on their feet*? Was it *partly*, again, by faith, and *partly* by works, that David overcame Goliath, because, although he tells him that he came against him "in the name of the Lord," he employed, notwithstanding, the instrumentality of a sling and a stone, and a certain acquired dexterity in using them, for accomplishing his overthrow? We allege, perhaps, nothing of this kind; we admit that it was "her faith," and her faith *only*, which "healed" the woman with the issue of blood; and their faith, and their *faith only*, which carried the Israelites through the Red Sea, as on dry ground; and the name of the Lord, and this *only*, in which David went against Goliath, though in all these instances a certain "work" concurred and was instrumental in producing the result; and where, then, is the inconsistency in affirming at once that we are justified by faith, and by faith only; and affirming at the same time, (in the easiest and most natural sense of the expressions,) that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only?" To be justified, indeed, "by the deeds of the law," and to be

justified "by faith" are opposite and contradictory conditions; but to be justified "by faith," and "by" the "works" *which are faith operating and coming out into display*, is precisely the same thing. Who ever heard, indeed, in other instances, of an opposition and rivalry between a moral principle and the course of action which results from it? Is it, for instance, in derogation of the patriotism, the gallantry, or other qualities displayed in the performance of them, that his brilliant or self-sacrificing achievements are enumerated in the hearing of some benefactor of his country, and that he is told that the honours and rewards which she bestows upon him have been *earned by those* achievements? Is it not, on the contrary, precisely as *manifestative of the qualities* which they are considered as displaying, that those achievements are so praiseworthy? Is it not precisely the *qualities* which are praised *in* the achievements—achievements which have not a particle of moral worth—have not the smallest character of *laudableness* whatever, beyond that which they derive from the patriotic self-devotion, the personal gallantry, the military skill, the statesmanship, as it may be, which is seen, or supposed to be inscribed on them? The achievements are not something *added* to, and thus capable of coming into competition with the principles of character which led to the performance of them; they *are*, on the contrary, those *principles in manifestation*, and (for any moral value that attaches to them) they are *nothing else*.

*It is altogether erroneous to compare the acts of a man before his fellow creatures with the acts of a man before God - a man may*

And where, then, is the contradiction, when we affirm, on the one hand, that we are justified by faith, and by faith only; and on the other, that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only?" It is, however, possibly inquired at this point, what it is that we then mean by faith, and by faith *only*? The reply may be given in the words of Hooker, "To the imputation of Christ's death for remission of sins we teach faith *alone* necessary, wherein it is not our meaning to separate thereby faith from any other quality or duty which God requireth to be matched therewith, but from faith to seclude, in justification, the fellowship of *worth through precedent works, as the Apostle Paul doth*<sup>1</sup>." Or the reply may be given in the very similar words of St. Augustine; for St. Paul's doctrine (St. Augustine says) is, "*ut nemo meritis priorum operum arbitretur se pervenisse ad donum justificationis quæ est in fide. In hoc enim se Gentibus in Christo credentibus Judæi præferre cupiebant quod dicebant se meritis bonorum operum quæ in lege sunt ad evangelicam gratiam pervenisse ideoque scandalizabantur multi qui ex eis crediderant quod incircumcisis Gentibus Christi gratia tenderetur, unde Ap. Paulus dicit posse hominem sine operibus, sed *præcedentibus*, justificari per fidem. . . . Quapropter non sunt sibi contrarii Apostoli Paulus et Jacobus, quia ille dicit de operibus quæ *fidem præcedunt*, iste de iis quæ*

*the la  
i.e. J.*

*the former i.e. Paul*

<sup>1</sup> Answer to Christian Letter, Keble's edit. vol. ii. p. 701.



fidem sequuntur; sicut etiam ipse Paulus multis locis ostendit<sup>2</sup>.”

I proceed to the third of the three propositions which I hoped to be able to establish—the proposition, namely, that St. James’s language admits of no other than the meaning which has given rise to the notion of a discrepancy between his doctrine of justification and the doctrine of St. Paul. And the proof of this proposition I might safely perhaps leave to the united testimonies of Hooker and Augustine just recited. It would, again, appear to have sufficient proof in the consideration, that this is certainly the simplest and most natural sense to assign to his expressions, and the one, accordingly, the authority and claims of which result, at once, in their full force, directly that the reason for diverting them to a different and less natural signification is seen to be devoid of any real foundation.

But, lastly, this meaning of St. James’s language may be argued from the difficulty in which controversialists have found themselves involved in seeking any other for it. Dr. Owen, for instance, and a host of writers of his school, interpret it one way: Dr. Wardlaw and his disciples are “dissatisfied” with this interpretation, and interpret it another. Bishop O’Brien deviates from both. On *his* principles, the Apostle’s language *has* the meaning for which we are contend-

<sup>2</sup> Lib. de Diversis Qæstionibus, tom. vi. p. 67.



ing, only (according to the Bishop) he is *not serious in what he says*. His meaning is not really what his words express. He affirms, indeed, that a man *in foro Dei* is "justified by works, and not by faith only," but he does not mean what he says. I accept the authority of the Bishop as conclusive, with regard to the force of the expressions, and this might, under the circumstances, seem sufficient; for the Bishop would probably be the first to admit the meaning which he claims for them to be uncalled for and inadmissible, except upon the supposition, that the contrary interpretation goes to put St. James at doctrinal variance with St. Paul. And as I have shown, as I hope, that this supposition is mistaken, it may seem needless to expose the error of the Bishop's interpretation. Can any thing, at the same time, be more evident, according even to the Bishop's own showing, than that the Apostle's entire argument turns upon the point, that faith is valueless *merely as faith*, and apart from certain moral and practical results in which it issues? "What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith, and *have not works*? Can faith (or *his* or *this* faith, as the Bishop) save him?" The argument does not turn on his *saying* that he has faith, when he has nothing of the kind, but upon his *wanting works*. What does it "profit *if* (ἐὰν) a man—have not works?" His either *saying* he has faith, or actually having it, would make no difference. It is the absence of works, that the Apostle fastens on.

And so again—"If a brother or sister be naked or destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding that ye give them not, &c., what doth it profit?" As much as to say, a man is no more to be justified by faith without works, than the hungry or the naked are to be warmed and nourished, without food or clothing, by good wishes or fair words. Again—"You have faith. Well, but it is not faith *as* faith, which is of any value, for the devils also believe and tremble. Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith *without works* is dead, being *alone*? And thus was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" "By doing so he showed that he *feared* God." He showed that the "faith" which had previously been "imputed unto him for righteousness," was out and out obedience in principle and germ, and that he was justified by it *in this view of it*. And what, accordingly, justified Rahab the harlot? Not an opinion or profession, but a service which she did the Israelites, expressive, indeed, of the fact that she believed that God was with them of a truth, but apart from which this faith, ineffectual and inoperative, would have been of no benefit to her in the world. I think it, then, evident, from the entire train of the Apostle's reasoning, that his "conclusion," that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," is perfectly serious and formal. He means that while a penitent is justi-

fied by faith, as “the obedience,” in “order” to which “the Gospel is preached among all nations,” so he is justified by works, as the same obedience in its progress and developement, in accordance with that remark of Field’s, “But some man may perhaps say, that a thing that was due in respect of the habit resting in the mind may become due in respect of the act done; and, consequently, that that which was due one way may become more ways due. Surely we make no question but it may, because it was due to the habit as to the root of such an action, when occasion should be offered and opportunity serve, and not otherwise<sup>3</sup>.”

It is true, then, that works are justifying only as they spring from, and thus express the operation of, a principle of *faith in divine mercy*; but then, again, this faith itself is only justifying as it receives Christ, as much in one as in another of His offices, as much submitting the believer’s mind to His illumination and instructions as his Prophet, and the believer’s heart and life to His government and regulation as his King, as depending for pardon and acceptance upon Him as his Priest—the believer confiding in God’s grace, not separately as exercised in the justification of his person, but jointly, as exercised also in the sanctification of his soul; not expecting his happiness merely from exemption from sin’s punishment,

<sup>3</sup> Book v. c. 20.

but, along with this, from deliverance also from its power; not merely from a title obtained to the rewards of righteousness, but, as well, from a capacity obtained at the same time to bring forth those “fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and the praise of God.” How true and striking that remark of Richard Baxter<sup>4</sup>, “Some may think that the high things required in the Gospel, self-denial, forsaking all, &c., are *more than the mere receiving a free gift*. But . . . on consideration, it will all appear to be *no more* materially, for, 1st, When we say that it is the receiving the free gift, we must mean—*according to the nature and use of that gift*—as if you be required to take food, the meaning is, to eat it, and not to throw it away. If you be required to take such a man to be your king, master, tutor, husband, physician, &c.—the meaning is, *as such*, to the *use of his proper office*. And so, to accept of God as *God*, that is, as our absolute ruler, owner, and end, and Christ as our Saviour, prophet, priest, and king, and the Holy Ghost as our sanctifier, to illuminate, quicken, and renew us, is the sum of all the positives of the Gospel. 2ndly, For this very acceptance of them in this nature and to this use, *includeth the using of them after accordingly*, and if we do not so use them, we *thereby reject* them, and lose our own benefit of them, as he that eateth not his meat, and he that

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Theology, part ii. sect. 10.

weareth not his clothes, and he that learneth not of his teacher." So entirely does Richard Baxter differ from the sentiment<sup>5</sup>, that "to include obedience in the nature of faith is to deviate manifestly from its meaning in common language." So little does he justify the Bishop in "presuming" that this is a sentiment, the truth of which, "all who contend for this, as its scriptural sense, would be ready to acknowledge." On the contrary, after reconciling the Apostles Paul and James on principles (if I understand him correctly) substantially identical with those asserted in this paper, he concludes with saying, "All this justification by works St. James is for, and it is *undeniable by any thing but prejudice, ignorance, and siding-peevishness*<sup>6</sup>." I should feel ashamed, myself, to resolve into no better principles the theology of so many great divines; but this is the sentiment of Richard Baxter; and I wish (I own) that Richard Baxter's sentiments and reasonings on this subject were more known and more considered than I am apprehensive that they are.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

CATHOLICUS.

<sup>5</sup> O'Brien, Serm. i. p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Cath. Theol. part ii. sect. 26, ad fin.



## LETTER II.

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SIR,

The doctrine of justification by faith is one of that fundamental importance, that every overstatement of the doctrine tending to impair its simplicity or embarrass its proof, is to be deprecated as a serious injury to the interests of pure and undefiled religion. This injury, I fear, has but too frequently been done. The inquirer after truth has been perplexed and, probably, misled. The formalist has been confirmed in his disastrous error by the title given to him to identify his cause with that of justification by works, as asserted by St. James. Against numbers struggling, perhaps, practically, for all that is spiritual and vital in Christianity, it has operated still as a legitimate and merited prejudice, that they have stood forward, at the same time, as the advocates of a theology, doctrinally absurd and antinomian, opposed to the plainest statements of the Word of God, and unknown in the Church Catholic (according to the confession or avowal of one of the most



devoted patrons of this doctrine) for fourteen, at least, out of the first fifteen hundred years of Christianity. The Romanist has found a signal triumph in the prevalence, among Protestants, of an error in the opposite extreme, more transparent, if not more malignant, than his own. The controversy has been put upon the issue of the Protestant's ability to evince a doctrine to be at once unscriptural and unspiritual, which is asserted in terms by the Apostle James. He has identified the cause of Protestantism with a theology which sets Scripture, tradition, and reason at defiance. It is no slight evidence of the grossness of papal error, that Protestantism should have been able to hold its ground under the pressure of so serious a disadvantage. It is no trifling token of the tenacity of life of the doctrine of justification by faith, that it should have at all survived the wounds which have been thus inflicted upon it in the house of its friends. How important, at the same time, that a doctrine so "wholesome," and so "very full of comfort," should neither be perverted nor disguised. I have ventured, in a former paper, to furnish what I conceive to be the scriptural and rational account of the relations of faith and works. I am desirous, in a second contribution, to add what I can of confirmation to my previous argument, by considering one or another of the principal objections, commonly relied upon, against the scheme which I am advocating.

One of these, and the one to which I shall con-

fine myself on this occasion, is, that the Apostle Paul excludes *all* works, and not some works only, from the office of justifying; and thus, among others, the works by which, according to St. James, "a man is justified, and not by faith only." That the contrary of this is the sentiment at once of Hooker and Augustine, we have seen already in my paper of last month. According to each of these authorities, the works excluded from the office of justifying by St. Paul are, characteristically and exclusively, "works done *before* the grace of Christ and inspiration of His Spirit." If the contrary opinion, then, is entertained, it is entertained in opposition to the views of Hooker and Augustine; and the proof of it ought to be proportionately laborious and conclusive. How, however, stands the fact? Of all the treatises which, at various times, have been composed in advocacy of that view of the doctrine of justification by faith, which I presume to consider as erroneous, perhaps, at present, the most popular and authoritative is the work on Justification by Bishop O'Brien. By the Bishop the subject has been frequently represented as exhausted, and the doctrine of justification by faith, according to his view of it, placed upon a rock from which all the efforts of its opponents, it is affirmed, will never be able to dislodge it. Will it, then, be believed that, in this celebrated work, there is no argumentative notice whatsoever of the doctrine held by Hooker and Augustine—held (I am bold to say) by every re-

spectable writer (sharing their opinions) on this subject? The corruptions of the doctrine of justification are, according to the Bishop<sup>1</sup>, of three classes, turning on assigning a different signification from what the Bishop considers is the true one, either to the term "works," the term "faith," or the term "justification." In addressing himself, however, to the task of illustrating and exposing the first of these three classes of alleged corruptions, the Bishop confines himself altogether to a notion (attributed, he says, to Origen, but erroneously, as he discovers, in a note) that the works excluded from the office of justifying by St. Paul are ceremonial, and not moral works. This position he, of course, finds no difficulty in overthrowing; and, after doing so, he appears to suppose that his road is open and unopposed to the conclusion that, under the denomination of the "deeds of the law," all works whatsoever are excluded from the office of justifying by St. Paul. The question is disposed of without even the semblance of a reference to the only class of adverse statements on the point which it was of any practical importance to the purposes of his argument that he should successfully confute. He celebrates a triumph without even reconnoitring the enemy. He captures a solitary straggler, and concludes the campaign to have terminated gloriously. In one place, it is true, the Bishop

<sup>1</sup> Serm. v.

makes a passing allusion to those who "are able to find that, when the Apostle says, 'We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,' he means that a man is justified partly by faith and partly by the deeds of the law<sup>2</sup>," and, in another, he notices the view of Bishop Bull, that justifying faith is inclusive of the works of Christian piety<sup>3</sup>. But in each instance the opinion is cited as bearing its own refutation on the face of it; and the work is actually carried to its close without even an attempt having been made to show the ground of argument to be erroneous which we have seen to be taken by Hooker and Augustine, and which is occupied notoriously by Baxter and by Bull. My object, then, in the present paper, will be that of showing, in conformity with the sentiments of the writers here alluded to, that the works excluded from the office of justifying by St. Paul are the works which *precede* faith, not the works which *follow* it and are *effects* of it.

Let it be observed, then, in proof of this position, in the first place, that the works thus excluded by the Apostle from the office of justifying, are "*the deeds of the law.*" "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the *deeds* (ἔργων) of the law,"—an expression by which, indeed, Bishop O'Brien appears to understand the obedience or moral excellence which the law required (and *which is equally required by the Gospel*);

<sup>2</sup> Serm. iv.

<sup>3</sup> Note on p. 10.

but which really stands for this obedience *peculiarly considered as meriting eternal life, according to the terms and conditions of the Law of Moses*. The deeds of the law are the acts of an obedience to that law (considered as a covenant of works), the promise of which is—"The man that doeth these things shall live in them;"—the penalty—"Cursed is he that continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The conclusion, then, of the Apostle is, that by the deeds of this law shall no flesh be justified—that the law requires an extent of obedience which no mere man has ever rendered, or will ever be capable of rendering, and requires, too, an obedience of this extent, as the indispensable condition of justification by its works; from all which it follows that a man is justified—if justified at all—"without the deeds of the law." He is justified under the provisions of some other covenant. He is thrown for his justification on the righteousness of another, as being legally and personally unrighteous in himself. The deeds of the law, then, excluded from the office of justifying by the Apostle in this passage, are not numerically those "good works" which the law and the Gospel equally require, but those works *specialy considered as answering the requirements of the Law of Moses*, considered as capable of "putting away sin," and "enduring the severity of God's judgment;" considered as exonerating from the curse, thus ascertained as being justly due to him



who continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of this law to do them, and in the place of it, entitling to the life which it secures, by promise, to a punctual and undeviating compliance with its precept. And if "the deeds of the law" are not an expression for good works, under *every* consideration of them, but *exclusively considered as meriting according to the terms of the covenant of works propounded in the Law of Moses*; then it is apparent, that there is not any thing in the conclusion that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," which is inconsistent with the doctrine that we are "justified by works and not by faith only," in the simplest and most natural sense of those expressions; for it may obviously be true, that a man is justified by faith, and not by a meritorious obedience to the Law of Moses, and true, at the same time, that, while justified by faith, he is justified also by the works, which are faith acting, and coming out in its results: and which justify, not as satisfying the conditions of a covenant of works, but as imputed for righteousness, under a covenant of grace.

I am not now affirming this to be the case. I am simply affirming that, supposing it alleged to be so, there is nothing to discredit such an allegation, in the doctrine of St. Paul, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law"—that "the deeds of the law," "without" which, according to St. Paul, a man is justified, are an



obedience altogether distinct in its conditions from that of the "works" *by* which a man is justified according to St. James, and that there is, in consequence, no inconsistency, nor an approach to inconsistency, in believing, according to the statement of the one, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," and according to the statement of the other (in the simplest and most natural sense of his expressions), that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." And thus, II., the works excluded from the office of justifying by St. Paul are *works to be performed by a man in his own strength*. "What shall we say, then, that Abraham, our father, *as pertaining to the flesh*, hath found?" To be "married" to the law, and to "be in the flesh," are, in Scripture, palpably convertible expressions. The two covenants are distinguished by the Apostle as the covenants of "the letter" and "the spirit"—the letter which "killeth," and the spirit which "giveth life;" the one "the ministration of death," because written and engraven on stones only, "ordained," indeed, "to life," but "found unto death," because "weak through *the flesh*,"—promising blessing to obedience, but not assisting and enabling to obey: the other, the ministration of righteousness, and, in *consequence of being so*, "the ministration of the Spirit." And thus the deeds of the law are not merely an obedience, performed under the condition of its *perfectly* meeting the requirements of the Law of Moses,

but this obedience *performed* by the man in his *own strength*, and as developed out of the resources of *the flesh*. "The law is not made for a righteous man." It is imposed upon a fallen sinner, to show him the extent of his responsibilities and his need of a Saviour; and instead of promising "grace to help in time of need," directs him rather to think of divine justice as *requiring previously to be satisfied, before the interferences of grace*<sup>4</sup> and mercy become possible, even as "the woman is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth;" so that, "if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress." The law stands between the man who is "under the law," and the dispensation to him of God's mercy, as the living husband stands between his wife and the possibility of her marrying another man. And hence it follows, that the deeds of the law are an obedience *rendered to the law in our own strength*. The law, as a rule of life, may be of course obeyed, by divine aids; but the law, as a covenant of works, reminds the sinner of the obedience for which he is responsible, and which God *requires* from him as the condition of His favour, in his fallen state. And thus, III., the works excluded from justifying by St. Paul, are *those works which are opposed to Divine Grace* ("If it be of grace, then it is no more of works"). And

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vii.

how, then, can those works be included in this number "with" which "the *grace of God* is exceeding abundant"—works of which it is alike the privilege and duty of the person doing them to say, "Not I, but the *grace of God* which was with me," works, "unto" which he has been "*created in Christ Jesus?*" And thus, lastly, the works excluded from justifying by St. Paul, are works which, supposing that they justified, would give, in doing so, "*whereof to glory;*" and is this the case with any works of which the person doing them has cause to say, "Not I, but the *grace of God* which was with me;" "Not I, but Christ that liveth in me?" The Apostle, in employing these expressions, in effect denies the works which a man does, with the aids of Divine grace, to stand on the same ground as those which he has performed in his own strength. He affirms, in effect, that while a man would have "whereof to glory," in performance of the one, it is not, on the contrary, he, but Divine grace which carries away the entire glory of the other. On the whole, then, it is untrue that the works excluded from justifying by St. Paul are identical with those "by" which "a man is justified," according to St. James. The works, on the contrary, excluded from justifying by St. Paul, are precisely those which have been done, as Hooker and Augustine tell us, "*before the grace of Christ and inspiration of His Spirit.*" He excludes no others, *not* because the justifying efficacy which he denies to

“works done before the grace of Christ,” is *attributable* to the works which are done *after* it, *but because* no other works *but those* of which he speaks, under the denomination of “the deeds of the law,” could make *their* pretensions to confer the *legal* righteousness of which he is here speaking. It never entered into the mind of the Apostle to explain that the works of an evangelical obedience were unequal to the office of investing with a legal righteousness, unequal to the office of “putting away sin,” or “enduring the severity of God’s judgment.” It is obviously impossible that any acts should have a moral value higher than, or distinct from, the principles they flow from. And what is it, accordingly, to be justified by the works, which are faith acting, but to be “justified by faith;” as what is it to be justified by faith, but to be “accepted in the Beloved,” in *the view of us, as confiding in Him*—that is, expecting our happiness, for time and for eternity, *from the fulfilment of His promises, and, accordingly, in the way of His obedience?*

CATHOLICUS.

## LETTER III.

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SIR,

Much reliance appears to be placed by solidian writers on two collateral arguments in favour of their scheme, which I think that it may be useful distinctly to consider. One of these is a doctrinal, the other a practical argument—one founded on the interpretation of Scripture, the other on the practical effects as illustrated in individuals.

I. First, then, it is affirmed that the possible misapplication of his doctrine, contemplated by St. Paul, when he proposed the question, “What shall we say, then; shall we continue in sin that grace may abound<sup>1</sup>?” is proof that the Pauline doctrine of justification is not that of justification by works, or moral obedience, inasmuch as who would think of taking encouragement for continuing in sin, from a doctrine of justification which formally suspended the benefit on the con-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 1.



dition of penitence and new obedience? And hence (it is said) the inevitable inference, that the benefit of justification is suspended by St. Paul on no condition of the kind; that justification (according to the doctrine of St. Paul) is by faith, and by faith only, without the concurrence of any description of good works—a doctrine which has always been loaded with the opprobrium of licentiousness, which has some appearance (at least, on the first blush) of vacating the necessity for obedience and good works, but which, instead of being liable to objection from this circumstance, derives from it, on the contrary, the final and indispensable evidence of its identity with the doctrine of St. Paul. Such is the manner in which solidian writers argue from the question proposed by the Apostle at the opening of the sixth chapter of the Romans, “What shall we say, then; shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” “How” the Apostle “answers this question,” Bishop O’Brien says that “it is beside” his “purpose to notice<sup>2</sup>.” The fact, however, is, that the Apostle’s answer to the question is destructive of the argument thus built upon it. It is, in effect, that his doctrine of justification *precludes the very notion of the justified man’s continuance in sin*—that “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness” is the very grace which faith receives, and which baptism administers. “*How*

<sup>2</sup> P. 101.



shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" while, further on, (ver. 16,) he affirms in terms, that "righteousness" is suspended on the condition of "obedience," and that death is the judicially inevitable consequence of unrepented "sin." So premature is the solifidian conclusion from the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" The Apostle's own reply to the inquiry is to the effect, that, suspended on the condition of penitence and new obedience, it is impossible that the justification of the Christian should consist with a continuance in sin. But then, the question itself!—Surely it implies that there was something in the doctrine of justification (as the Apostle had been previously propounding it) to give rise to this idea. Undoubtedly there was. And it is evident, also, what this was. The Apostle, up to the end of the fifth chapter, had been occupied in asserting the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, as opposed to the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law, and he had just remarked that it was so far from being the case, that "the law was given" that "righteousness should be" by "it, that it actually" entered, "that the offence might abound," and by abounding, illustrate all the more conspicuously, the riches of that grace which abounded, notwithstanding, even more. After this, then, it was no impertinent or unnatural inquiry, whether we should not continue in sin that grace might abound, whether, [if it was (as St. Paul had stated

it to be) the case, that the aboundings of man's sin were the very means of bringing into manifestation, and so of glorifying, the *super*-aboundings of God's grace,] it did not follow, according to this statement, that the way to glorify God was to continue in sin, in order to give all the greater occasion for the exercise and manifestation of His grace. This, I conceive, is the obvious and sufficient account of the inquiry with which the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans opens—not that the *entire* doctrine of justification, as propounded by St. Paul in this Epistle, was exposed to a construction like the one implied in the terms of this inquiry, but that such a question arose naturally *at that point* of his argument at which the Apostle had arrived at the *close of the fifth* chapter—that it was suggested by the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, as St. Paul had been *hitherto* asserting it—that is, as opposed to the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law—calling accordingly (for the sake of obviating the notion that the Apostle's doctrine was in reality exposed to any such construction) for that explanation of the *plan* and *method* of God's grace as proposed to us in the Gospel, which the Apostle immediately proceeds to give, and which occupies him throughout the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters. The Apostle had propounded but *half* his doctrine of justification up to the close of the fifth chapter; the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters are devoted to the exposition of the *other half*.

He had exhibited, *principally*, one *phase* of it in the class of statements with which he had been dealing in the earlier chapters. He goes on, in this, to the exhibition of its *other phase*. He had asserted already the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, in opposition to the doctrine of justification by a meritorious obedience to the law of Moses. He now asserts the doctrine of justification by a grace which suspends on the condition of "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness," the justification which it offers—working itself, indeed, this "death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness," in as many as believe, and laying it, at the same time, at the foundation of all hope of pardoning mercy, and divine acceptance—the salvation, doubtless, by grace through faith, but the *object* of faith, a Saviour associating sinners in His life, and conforming them to His image, and the *act* of faith accordingly, the act of expecting pardon through His blood, on the condition of welcoming His Spirit and minding His directions. Such, I conceive, is the account to be afforded of St. Paul's inquiry, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" in connexion with the answer which he gives to it; an account of it which rescues the scriptural doctrine of justification from an exception of some speciousness, and shows that there is nothing whatsoever to embarrass the doctrine of justification by conditional works in the terms of this inquiry.

II. Another objection to the doctrine of justifica-

tion by conditional works, is drawn from the practical tendency and consequences of this doctrine. Of its inconsistency with "peace and joy in believing" the experience and testimony of Dr. Johnson in particular, (O'Brien, p. 332<sup>3</sup>), is adduced as satisfactory and conclusive evidence. Dr. Johnson (Boswell, a Day at Dilley's,) asserts that "no rational man can die without uneasy apprehensions," because "no man can be sure that his repentance and obedience will obtain salvation;" and hence (it is argued) the inconsistency with peace of the doctrine of salvation by conditional works. May it not, however, be inquired, why so much reliance is reposed in a question of this kind, on the authority of Dr. Johnson? Why the testimony of a "moralist" is adduced instead

<sup>3</sup> The discrepancy of sentiment on a cardinal point between the two most celebrated of our more recent solidian writers is remarkable. Bishop O'Brien, in the note to which I am referring, characterizes as "new in Protestant theology," and "most strange," Bishop Bull's remark: "'resipiscentiam non esse opus unicum aut simplex sed multorum aliorum operum quasi complexionem;' these 'opera pœnitentiæ' being (according to Bishop Bull's enumeration) *eleven* in number. On the contrary, according to Professor Garbett, (Bampton Lecture, iv. p. 395,) not only in the internal workings of repentance are there many acts, but in the preparatory condition of repentance there are many acts, which, as previous conditions, are indispensable. They are a *sine quâ non*. *No judicious advocate of justification by faith only means to dispute this*. So that if there were one hundred works, instead of the ten or twelve which Bull enumerates, the case is not altered." Can Bishop O'Brien and Mr. Garbett be advocating one and the *same* doctrine of Justification?



of that of a divine,—why the views and experience of a man eminent only for the “wisdom of this world,” are made to stand as criteria of a doctrine at once held and advocated by Baxter, by Doddridge, by Davenant, and by Bull? Surely if the experience of these eminent men directly contradicts the sentiment that “no rational man can die without uneasy apprehensions” as long as he considers his salvation as suspended on the condition of good works, in this case, one or other of these two conclusions would appear to be inevitable: either, first, that the doctrine held by Dr. Johnson at the time is less inconsistent with “peace and joy in believing,” than he considered it to be; or else, (which I apprehend to be the true account of the difference,) that the doctrine of conditional works, as held by these divines, is one essentially different, and easily distinguishable, from the legal and depressing views of Dr. Johnson. It is true, indeed, that as Dr. Johnson held that no man speaking “the words of truth and soberness,” would ever say that he was “sure of his salvation,” so these writers (as the result of personal experience gained perhaps among some of the holiest people of their day) declare it to have been a “very small number that they could ever hear say, I am sure of my justification and salvation<sup>4</sup>,” and that “the generality of Christians are exercised with many doubts about

<sup>4</sup> Cath. Theol. of God's Gov., sect. 16.



their own state<sup>5</sup>,” and that thus “the certainty of salvation is very rare;” but then we hear from the same writers of “a great number who have lived in holy confidence, hope, and peace, and some in great joy, but most in *tolerable* fears and doubting, and *some few oppressed* by those doubts;” and that thus, “where there is not full assurance, there may nevertheless” (instead of the “uneasy apprehension” so inevitable in the view of Dr. Johnson) “be a cheerful and prevailing hope<sup>6</sup>;” and this, also, for an obvious reason, namely, that according to the views of these divines, the hope of the Christian springs from the sincerity, not from the measure and amount of his obedience, from his experienced and proved spirituality of principle and aim, and not from the degree of his attainments; from his works, considered, not as the meritorious fulfilment of a legal condition, but as the operation, and accordingly as the evidence, of an evangelical and lively faith. There is surely all the difference in the world between the theology of a person looking to his “obedience and repentance” to “obtain salvation” in the former sense, and that of a person thinking of them as the conditions on which salvation is suspended in the latter. I may feel, for instance, and see by its results, that my repentance and obedience is sincere and real; and I may feel at the same moment, and

<sup>5</sup> Doddridge, Lectures on the Doctrine of Assurance.

<sup>6</sup> Cath. Theol. and Doddridge’s Lectures, as above.

discern by the results, that it is defective and contaminated. Let me think, then, that God demands from me, as the condition of His favour and forgiveness, an exercise of repentance and obedience in the full (or any thing approaching to the full) extent of my responsibilities, and I “must be contented to acknowledge that death is a terrible thing to my life’s end.” Let me have reason for believing, on the contrary, that the condition on which salvation is suspended is that of a sincere and real, though, to the last, defective repentance and obedience, and in this case the very same repentance and obedience (which, supposing it regarded in the light of a meritorious fulfilment of condition, would have plunged me in despondency, if it did not in despair,) considered now as simply evidential of a lively faith, as, indeed, a *sine quâ non* in respect of its existence, but not in respect of its perfection, considered as the vital action of the new creation in Christ Jesus,) becomes, however feeble or however sickly, the source of an encouragement and hope which is lively and prevailing in proportion to the conviction which I feel, not of its perfection or degree, but of its reality and truth. And the simple question then is, whether a man can ever be “assured,” or ever reach with reason a “cheerful and prevailing hope,” that his repentance and obedience are sincere and spiritual. If he can, then the doctrine of salvation by conditional works, in the sense in which it is maintained by Bull and Davenant, by

Baxter and Doddridge, may consist with "peace and joy in believing and abounding hope<sup>7</sup>." If it cannot, no *sufficient* foundation for this peace and joy is laid, in this case, even in *the doctrine of justification by faith only*, inasmuch as if we are incapable of knowing that our repentance is sincere, we *must be equally incapable of ascertaining the liveliness of our faith*. If we can tell that our hearts are changed, we may then tell that our repentance is sincere; and if we cannot, it is in vain in this case to suppose that we can ever have the comfort of finding our faith lively. It appears, then, to be a groundless imputation on the doctrine of salvation by conditional works, as affirmed by our divines, that it militates with the peace and hope which so characteristically belong to the true members of Christ's body. The doctrine, on the contrary, has been affirmed from the earliest pe-

<sup>7</sup> It may, possibly, be as well to cite the doctrine of Doddridge on this subject. It is that "faith in Christ is in general committing our souls to Him for salvation in His appointed way." Lectures, Part v. Defin. 82. It "includes in its nature and inseparable effects the whole of moral virtue. (Corollary 1, on the same.) Some divines have chosen to call this purpose of holy obedience essential to true faith *internal* good works, and the fruit actually produced in this life *external*; and in this sense it must be acknowledged that, according to our definition of faith . . . we maintain the universal necessity of good works as much as any can do. (Scholium 2 on Corollary 2.) All those passages which declare holiness to be necessary to salvation would be utterly inconsistent with the promises made to faith, (see O'Brien, Serm. vi. p. 146,) if faith did not imply such a prevailing resolution of holy obedience." (Propos. 137, Dem. vol. ii. p. 231.)

riod of the Christian era to the present moment, by the holiest, the happiest, and most discriminating of all Christians. It was (according to Milner, and "his witness is true") the doctrine of the entire army of the Church's martyrs, in the primitive ages of the Gospel. It was the doctrine of St. Augustine when raised up to invigorate and elevate her piety in the fifth century, and (amidst all the disturbing influences by which it has been encountered since the days of Luther) it has still remained the doctrine of the best and wisest of our theologians of all denominations, and all times, of Bull and Davenant, of Baxter and of Doddridge. In fine, then, in the words of Baxter<sup>s</sup>, "the great justification by faith, mentioned so oft in Scripture, is, upon merely believing we are first made just by free-given pardon, and right to life (and true sanctification with it), and we are sentenced just, because so first made just. But this is not without our faith and repentance. 2ndly, And that faith and repentance are a righteousness evangelical, i. e. a performance of the condition on which the covenant of grace doth freely give us right to Christ, pardon and life, and so are the constitutive causes of the subordinate justification.

*Objection.*—By this you will fall in with the Papists, who take justification partly by Christ's righteousness, and partly by our own, and partly in pardon, and partly in faith and holiness.

<sup>s</sup> Cath. Theol. b. 2, Eleventh Day's Conference.

“*Answer.*—Tell not me of the names of Papists or any to frighten me from plain Scripture truth. Why may not I rather say—why do you go from all the ancient writers and Churches, even Augustine himself, by your new and contrary opinion? Was true justification unknown for so many hundred years after the Apostles? What an honour is done to Popery, and what a dishonour to the reformed Churches, when it shall be concluded that all the Churches heretofore, even next after the age of the Apostles, and almost all the present Churches, were, and are, against the doctrine of the Protestants, and on the Papists’ side. And yet how many do us this injury, and the Roman Church this honour. About the nature of justifying faith, and its office to justification, and about the nature of justification itself, and imputation of righteousness, and free-will, and about man’s works and merits, and about assurance of salvation and perseverance, how many do call that Popery which the whole current of Greek and Latin Fathers do assert, and all the ancient Churches owned, and most of all the present Churches in the world<sup>9</sup>.”

CATHOLICUS.

<sup>9</sup> Thirteenth Day’s Conference. “Error, Sin, and Danger which many fall into on Pretence of avoiding Popery.”



## POSTSCRIPT, 1862.

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It would be easy to fortify the view of justification taken in these letters, with many additional authorities, as of Bp. Hall, who says <sup>1</sup>: “God doth not justify the wicked man *as such*; but, of wicked, makes him good; not by a mere acceptance, but by a real change, while He justifies those whom He sanctifies.” And of Bp. Davenant, one of whose propositions in his Treatise on Justification <sup>2</sup> is: “Some good works are necessary to justification, as concurrent or preliminary conditions, although they are not necessary, as efficient or meritorious causes.” It has been my wish, however, to make this discussion as brief as the object which it contemplates would conveniently admit; and I shall, therefore, terminate it at this point with a single remark. It is this,—Would the reader bring his scheme of justification to a safe test, let him try it by the relation in

<sup>1</sup> Old Religion.

<sup>2</sup> CXXXI. Allport's Translation.

which it stands to the doctrine of the Redeemer's Intercession,—a doctrine denounced by Mr. Maurice<sup>3</sup>, and without a place in that system of theology of which, after a lapse of thirty years, Bishop O'Brien appears before the public, in a second edition, as the deliberate and persevering advocate. Of the theologians of this school, it is the remark of Baxter<sup>4</sup>, and the same remark is made, in substance, by Dean Jackson<sup>5</sup>, that “they look on Christ Himself as if they had no more use for Him, either to continue their justification or forgive their sin,”—a remark the truth of which is confirmed both by Owen<sup>6</sup> and Goodwin<sup>7</sup>, each of whom complains of the *neglect* of the doctrine of the Redeemer's intercession by the Christians of their day,—the disciples, in effect, truer than their masters to the tendencies and instincts of the theology in which they had been educated. And this, indeed, is the way always. The Romanism with which we are popularly and practically conversant is not exactly the Romanism of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and in Protestant Schools similarly, the error which exists in a form of mitigation, and lies half concealed in the writings of the learned though mistaken theo-

<sup>3</sup> On Sacrifice, p. 259. Compare Rom. v. 8—11.

<sup>4</sup> Life of Faith, c. vii.

<sup>5</sup> B. x.

<sup>6</sup> On Hebrews vii. 25.

<sup>7</sup> On Election, b. iv. c. 8.

logian, displays its virus mainly in that popular theology which is the mischievous, but legitimate and inevitable application of his doctrines. Thus an erroneous system of theology, like "evil men," "will wax worse and worse." The happy inconsistency which their learning and fidelity to Scripture impose on its first authors, or more learned advocates, is remarked by the common run of their disciples, not as inspiring any doubt about the soundness of the theology itself, but as a reason for carrying out its principles into the application, which they see that they require, though an application monstrous in itself, and in the flattest contradiction to the Word of God. And hence that "progress of error" of which the history of the Church supplies us with so many conspicuous examples. "It is *sensible* to think," says Lord Bacon<sup>8</sup>, "that when men enter first into search and inquiry, according to the social frames and compositions of their understanding, they light on different conceits, and so all opinions and doubts are beaten over, and then men having made a taste of all, wax weary of variety, and so reject the worst and hold themselves to the best . . . . which, afterwards, are received and carried on, and the rest extinct. *But* Truth is contrary, and Time is like a river which carrieth down things which are light and blown up, and

<sup>8</sup> Of the Interpretation of Nature, c. 7.

sinketh and drowneth that which is sad and weighty. For, the state of knowledge is ever a democracy, and that prevaieth which is most agreeable to the senses and conceits of people."

THE END.

2  
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